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ARTS | ART IN REVIEW

By GRACE GLUECK

Collages by Irwin Kremen

ACA Galleries
41 East 57th Street
Manhattan
Through Oct. 3

Irwin Kremen melds "experienced" materials -- mainly weathered poster fragments and other scraps of paper exposed to sun, rain and city grime -- into lyrical, subtle small collages. Though abstract and subjectless, they can reflect emotional states, suggest the passage of time and hint at landscape.

As in Abstract Expressionist painting, color, surface incidents and accidents of the material play a strong role in giving each work its life. But echoes of artists like Rothko, Josef Albers and inevitably Robert Motherwell can also be discerned.

Recently Mr. Kremen has begun to broaden his use of materials, as in "Ji II," where he shapes the corduroy-surfaced, flaky components of a wasp's nest into a roughly circular form, delicately colored in shades of gray, tan and creamy white.

In "It Adds Up IV," a more formally composed work, two jauntily placed half moons, made by slicing a sandpaper disk, impinge one on the other with a frothy outcrop of rusted metal playing off of them.

Still, found paper plays the major role in this show, seen in such beautiful collages as "Tanti Azzurri No. 4," a long horizontal rectangle of deep ocean blue streaked with random vertical lines and speckles of contrasting buff, and "High C" (many of his titles are punning), a sere yellow desertscape whose battered, eroded terrain is randomly pierced by small free-form spots of color like tiny lakes.

More playful compositions include "As Such," an earlier work from the mid-1980's in which horizontal strata of colored papers are dizzily inflected by built-up patchworks of tiny scraps.

Some of the work doesn't quite come off, most notably more "arty" collages like "R.S.V.P." a large composition in which a sandpaper disk bearing a twisted piece of rope is offset by triangular and rectangular shapes below it, all placed on a white ground with lots of layout space. Mr. Kremen is at his best in the intimate vernacular pieces that constitute most of his work.

But altogether this is a fine show, well presented and more than well worth seeing.